

Rule of Three

Q. What is the “RULE of THREE”?

A. Applicants from the general public interested in permanent Federal employment who do not have any form of federal civil service appointment status, may apply for federal civil service jobs via public notice vacancy announcements. The public notice vacancy announcements are published by the Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) of the SWCPOC and are identified by the announcement number (which will always begin with 14DF) and a statement on the announcement that reads "This is a Delegated Competitive Examining announcement open to all U. S. Citizens." Individuals compete based upon their experience, training and education and are referred to the selecting official via Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or DEU Certificates of Eligibles. Applicants are evaluated using OPM qualification standards for the specific position being filled, and are assigned a numerical rating based upon their overall qualifications for the position. Candidates referred via DEU certificates are ranked in score order. Those applicants eligible for Veterans Preference receive an additional 5 to 10 points depending upon the nature of their preference. Normally, the top three candidates are referred, with additional candidates added if more than one vacancy is being filled. For selection, the "rule of three" applies. This means that when selecting from a certificate of eligibles, a selection must be made from the highest 3 available candidates. For a second position, the selection must be made from the highest 3 remaining candidates. More specifically, the top 3 available candidates on the register must be in consideration in all situations at all times (in descending order), keeping in mind that a candidate with veterans preference cannot be bypassed to select a non-preference eligible. Generally speaking, a candidate below the top three scoring applicants may not be selected for the position unless a higher scoring applicant declines or is appointed to the position

Reduction in Force (RIF)

Q. What is “Reduction in Force (RIF)”?

A. RIF occurs when an employee is released from his/her competitive level by separation, demotion, furlough for 30 days or more, or reassignment requiring displacement of another employee.

Q. When is RIF necessary?

A. RIF may be necessary due to (1) lack of work; (2) shortage of funds; (3) reorganization; (4) a person exercising their re-employment rights; or, (5) reclassification of an employee's position due to erosion of duties. In most cases, RIF is initiated only after other alternatives fail.

Q. Can the need for RIF be avoided?

A. There are several ways for management to avoid the need to have a RIF. This may include management actions such as (1) offer of VERA - Voluntary Early Retirement Authority; (2) offer of VSIP – Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay; (3) hiring freezes; (4) stock-piling vacancies; (3) hiring temporary employees; (4) reductions in other expenditures such as training and travel; and (5) pre-RIF placement of employees. If a RIF becomes unavoidable, it is very important for everyone involved to ensure that the process is carried out smoothly. Contact between the Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) and Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) is crucial to carry out the RIF process. Supervisors should keep their employees informed and ensure that position.

Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

Q. What is VRA?

A. VRA refers to Veterans Recruitment Appointment. The VRA is a special authority by which agencies may, if they wish, appoint an eligible veteran without competition. Candidates must meet the basic qualification requirements for the position. Use of the authority is entirely discretionary and no one is entitled to a VRA appointment.

Q: Who is eligible for a VRA?

A. Disabled veterans; (compensable or non-compensable); Veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized (veteran must have been awarded the badge, not just have been in the military at the time); Veterans who, while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, participated in a United States military operation for which an Armed Forces Service Medal (AFSM) was awarded; and (veteran must have been awarded the AFSM); Recently separated veterans. (Recently separated veterans are defined as those who have separated from active service within the last three years).

Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)

Q. What is VEOA?

A. The Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act of 1998, also known as "VEOA", allows additional employment opportunities for veterans by allowing them to apply and compete for vacancies under merit promotion procedures. When agencies issue vacancy announcements to accept applications from individuals outside their agency, the law requires the agency to allow eligible veterans to apply also.

Q. How do I know when applications are being accepted from VEOA candidates?

A. Look in the section of the vacancy announcement titled “Area of Consideration” to see if applications are being accepted from VEOA eligibles.

Q. Who is eligible for VEOA?

A. Eligible veterans are those who have been honorably separated and are either a preference eligible or have substantially completed 3 or more years of active service. Active service under the law means active duty in a uniformed service and includes full-time training duty; annual training; full-time National Guard duty; and school attendance while in the active service at a designated service school by law or by the Secretary concerned.

Q. How do VEOA candidates compete?

A. Veterans compete with current federal employees (also known as “internal” applicants) under merit promotion procedures. Veterans’ preference is not a factor when considering individuals under merit promotion procedures. A VEOA eligible that competes under merit promotion procedures and is among the best qualified will be referred with other candidates for consideration.

Time-In-Grade (TIG)

Q. What is Time-In-Grade (TIG)?

A. Time-in-grade (TIG) restrictions are outlined in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations. The purpose of TIG restrictions is to prevent excessively rapid promotions. Time-in-grade provisions apply only to General Schedule (GS) positions. Time-in-grade restrictions apply to all current federal GS employees whose appointment eligibility is either “inservice” or “transfer”.

Q. When does TIG not apply?

A. Generally, TIG generally does NOT apply to:

- Appointments from a register of eligibles (OPM or DEU); or
- Certain noncompetitive appointments based on special authority or Executive order, i.e., Veterans Readjustment Appointments (VRA), 30% disabled veterans; Executive Order 12721 (military spouses who worked overseas) eligibles; or
- Advancement of an employee from a non-GS position to a GS position.

Q. What are the general restrictions?

A. The following are the general restrictions:

Advancement to positions at GS-12 and above. Individuals must have completed a minimum of 52 weeks in positions no more than one grade lower (or equivalent) than the position to be filled.

Advancement to positions at GS-6 thru GS-11. Individuals must have completed a minimum of 52 weeks in positions:

- No more than two grades lower than the position being filled when the position is in a two-grade interval series;
- No more than one grade lower than the position being filled when the position is in a one-grade interval series.

Advancement to positions up to GS-5. There is no time restriction as long as the individual held a non-temporary position no more than two grades below the position being filled within the preceding 52 weeks.

DD-214

Q. Where can I obtain a DD-214 for employment purposes?

A. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has a website where veterans (or a veteran's family member) can obtain a copy of a DD-214 online for personal or employment purposes. Use this address: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>

Specialized Experience Statements

Q. How are the specialized experience statements on the job announcements developed?

A. The supervisor is the best source in developing the specialized experience statement. The second best source is the position description. Within the position description Factor 1, Knowledge Required and Duties that encompass the majority of the workers' time (normally more than 40%), provide the best measure of success for a valid specialized experience statement.

Competitive Actions Versus Noncompetitive Actions

Q. What is a competitive action?

A. Generally, any promotion, demotion, reassignment, transfer, reinstatement, or appointment to a position with higher promotion potential or grade than any position previously held by an applicant is considered to be a competitive action. In other words, competition is required for applicants who have never held (i.e., competed for) a position at the higher grade(s), or higher promotion potential, than the position being filled.

Q. What is a noncompetitive action?

A. Generally, any promotion, demotion, reassignment, transfer, reinstatement, or appointment based on prior service in a position no higher than, or with no more promotion potential than, a position you held on a permanent basis, serving on a career or career conditional appointment in the competitive service. In other words, you have already competed for that grade or level of promotion potential and you can go back to it noncompetitively, without competing again.

Q. If I am eligible for noncompetitive action, is a supervisor required to request me for promotion?

A. No. Eligibility does not necessarily provide entitlement.

Q. Even if I have noncompetitive promotion eligibility, can I still apply for merit promotion announcements?

A. Yes. You are encouraged to do so. From a merit promotion announcement, you may be referred noncompetitively, in some cases, or you may be rated against the same skills competitive applicants are evaluated against, and referred competitively when you match sufficient skills to be placed in the Best-Qualified group of applicants for referral. You should always exercise all application options available to you.

Q. If I am referred noncompetitively, does the supervisor have to select me?

A. No.

Q. Are there other situations where a person could be promoted noncompetitively?

A. Yes. For instance, position is upgraded due to accretion of duties; issuance of new classification standards; career promotion (such as an upward mobility/intern/trainee positions where competition was held at an earlier date), etc.

Pay Problem Reporting Tool (PPRT)

Q. What is the Pay Problem Reporting Tool (PPRT)?

A. The Pay Problem Reporting Tool (PPRT) in Army Regional Tools (ART) is an automated tool used to report pay problems for corrective action. Only problems that meet the definition of a pay problem should be reported using this tool.

Q. What is a pay problem?

A. A legitimate pay issue, reported to the automated payroll problem reporting system that has already impacted salary, entitlement, or benefits. This would include any issue when the paycheck or leave is either too little, too much, or too late. Examples of pay problems include an invalid SCD that impacts the amount of leave accrued; missing WGI; no check for a new hire, incorrect salary amount, etc.

Q. What are not considered pay problems?

A. Employee questions about when a WGI is due; the timekeeper recorded the wrong amount of leave or hours worked, questions concerning veteran's preference, etc.

Q. How are non-PPRT issues handled?

A. Through submission of a Personal Inquiry Form (PIF). These forms may be obtained by contacting your local Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC). You may submit hard copy or email. PIF forms should be sent through your local CPAC to the Southwest Civilian Personnel Operations Center (SWCPOC).

Q. How do I request submission of a PPRT ticket if I think I have a pay problem?

A. You should contact your local CPAC. CPAC staff members will assist you in determining if you have a legitimate pay problem. If you do, they will enter a PPRT ticket at that time. As responses are annotated in the automated system throughout the ticket resolution process, those responses are emailed to the individual who entered the ticket on your behalf. That individual, in turn, will keep you informed of status updates received.

Q. How long does it take to get an answer on a PPRT ticket?

A. The CPOC will attempt to complete their action required to correct reported pay problems within 2 weeks of receipt. Some resolutions are more complex, some require sending off for records/information from other offices, etc. and will require a longer time period to bring to completion. The status of the action will be reflected in the ticket.

Q. As soon as my ticket is closed, will I receive my correct salary, leave, benefits, etc.?

A. You should receive fairly soon but remember, all actions must also be processed through normal payroll procedures. You should watch your LES for at least two pay periods or so after you are notified that your PPRT ticket has been

closed/resolved. If you do not see the results you anticipated, contact your local CPAC for further assistance.